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14. ABSTRACT Southeast Asia is vulnerable to the spread of radical Islam. Al Qaeda's Salafi Jihadist message has found an audience in parts of Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and elsewhere. The United States has strategic interests in the stability of the region. Any additional freedom of action by terrorist organizations could create regional economic and political instability, and directly threaten the United States and its allies. The United States has been successful in assisting the Philippines combat the Abu Sayaff Group through diplomacy and an efficient use of security cooperation programs. This paper examines the history and impact of the most prominent radical Islamic groups in SE Asia - Jemaah Islamiyah of Indonesia and the Abu Sayyaf Group of the Philippines, and why they pose a significant threat to the United States. This paper also examines the Muslim regions of Thailand and why they are vulnerable to the spread of radical Islam if not given the requisite amount of attention at both the strategic and operational level.					
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Southeast Asia: The Third Front in the Long War

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations based on the following assigned topic:

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Abstract

Southeast Asia: The Third Front in the Long War

Southeast Asia is vulnerable to the spread of radical Islam. Al Qaeda's Salafi Jihadist message has found an audience in parts of Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and elsewhere. The United States has strategic interests in the stability of the region. Any additional freedom of action by terrorist organizations could create regional economic and political instability, and directly threaten the United States and its allies. The United States has been successful in assisting the Philippines combat the Abu Sayaff Group through diplomacy and an efficient use of security cooperation programs. This paper examines the history and impact of the most prominent radical Islamic groups in SE Asia - Jemaah Islamiyah of Indonesia and the Abu Sayyaf Group of the Philippines, and why they pose a significant threat to the United States. This paper also examines the Muslim regions of Thailand and why they are vulnerable to the spread of radical Islam if not given the requisite amount of attention at both the strategic and operational level.

Introduction

Many political and military pundits have recently embraced the idea that the United States' Long War "started in Afghanistan and will likely finish there." This bumper sticker phrase is consistent with recent U.S. policy and strategy decisions with the well-publicized shift in focus from Iraq to Afghanistan. However, it seemingly disregards what many people have called the third front in the Long War - Southeast Asia.

Southeast (SE) Asia has long been dealing with the threat of radical Islam. The United States has dealt with Islamic insurgents in Southeast Asia since the early 1900s

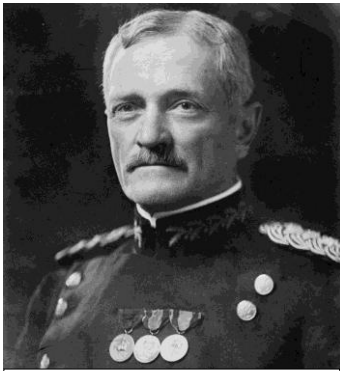


Fig 1. Gen Pershing

when Black Jack Pershing (pictured) was both a small unit commander and later the Military Governor on the Filipino island of Mindanao.¹ As if to highlight and underscore the true meaning of the Long War, we find ourselves still embroiled in operations to pacify radical Islamists in Mindanao and the Southern Philippines over 100 years later.

However, the problem of radical, violent Islam is not confined to the Southern Philippines. This paper will examine the history and impact of the most prominent radical Islamic groups in SE Asia - The Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) of Indonesia and the Abu Sayaff Group (ASG) of the Philippines, and why they pose a significant threat to the United States. This paper will also argue that Muslim regions in Thailand are vulnerable to the spread of radical Islam if not given the requisite amount of attention at both the strategic and operational level.

The Rise of the Salafi Movement

In order to understand the goals and motivations of the radical Islamists in SE Asia, one must first understand the nature of the radical Islamic movement. *Salafi* is a term often used to describe fundamentalist Islamic thought.² Jihad (*Arabic for struggle*)³ is what most of us have come to know as an Islamic holy war. Authors and terrorism experts Mark Stout, Thomas Lynch, and T.X. Hammes describe *Salafi Jihadism* as a specific understanding of the Sunni Islamic faith practiced by Al Qaeda that inspires scores of isolated groups around the world.⁴ Stout et al. go on to describe the ultimate goals of Salafi Jihadists as the following:

Salafi Jihadism is a minority, reactionary viewpoint within a wider acrimonious debate among Muslims about how to reconcile the progress and frustration unleashed across the Islamic world by modernization and globalization. Though many Muslims (and, for that matter, many non-Muslims) are concerned about the implications of globalization, only a tiny minority of Sunnis adhere to the stern tenets of this harsh and xenophobic world view, which calls of the formation of a caliphate - an Islamic superstate stretching from Spain to Indonesia - and the conversion of all other Muslims, from their purportedly innovative, unfounded, and corrupt beliefs.⁵

Usama bin Laden's Al Qaeda (*the base*) has been the primary proponent of the Salafi



Fig. 2 Usama bin Laden

Jihadist Movement since the end of the first Gulf War. Along with the establishment of the caliphate, one of their first early goals was the expulsion of the United States from the Holy Lands, *vice the destruction of the U.S.* However, this softer

stance has been modified and replaced with a much harsher goal

and message of war. Bin Laden has called for Jihad against “the source” for all the world's corruption, materialism and sin - the United States. Author and Terrorism expert Peter Chalk states that bin Laden is fixated on a Pan Islamic revolution and that bin

Laden believes “there can be no respite until the United States and all those that support and adhere to its values are destroyed.”⁶ Bin Laden’s view of Salafi Jihadism has emerged and gained traction throughout SE Asia. Al Qaeda’s one-time ancillary relationships with Jemaah Islamiyah and the Abu Sayaff Group are now more cooperative, formal and dangerous to the United States and its allies.

Islam in Southeast Asia

The introduction of Islam to SE Asia can be traced back as early as the 12th century. Author and SE Asia expert Bilveer Singh said that Islam was brought to SE Asia from



Arab traders and not religious scholars.⁷ Muslims in SE Asia also claim to have a Malay ethnic identity that is again traced back to this interaction with Arab traders. The traders were known to settle in several parts of SE Asia, marry indigenous women, and practice and

spread Islam. Islam spread throughout SE Asia because of widespread attendance in pondoks, or Muslim religious schools analogous to the madrasas of the Middle East.⁸ Islam grew in popularity with the masses compared to Hinduism because of the Quran's provisions about the equality of mankind versus the unyielding caste structure associated with Hinduism.⁹

According to Singh, Malay was the common language used by the Arabs who traded with the indigenous people throughout SE Asia.¹⁰ Even today the Indonesians and Malaysians share a very similar language, Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Malaysia.¹¹ Singh goes on to further explain the "Malayness" of other SE Asian Muslims by stating "the Muslim minorities in Thailand's five southernmost provinces of Pattani, Songkhla, Satun, Yala, and Narathiwat and the Philippine Muslim-populated regions identify themselves as Malays rather than Thais or Filipinos."¹²

Access to critical trade routes and raw materials prompted the arrival of European powers to SE Asia around the 16th Century. The arrival of Europeans also meant the introduction of Christianity to many regions. The Europeans attempted to use missionaries and the spread of Christianity as a soft power tool to increase their influence in the region. The logic being that the commonality of religion would improve relations with the indigenous population and preclude the need for "hard power" military might. *Perhaps the Arab traders sought similar effects when they brought Islam to the region in the previous centuries.*

The Philippines is predominantly Catholic today because of four centuries of occupation by the Spanish. However, author and SE Asia Max Gross claims that the introduction of Western powers into SE Asia actually facilitated the spread of Islam.¹³ Gross goes on to explain that "Islamic missionary activity proved even more successful in promoting a unifying mechanism for resisting the permanence of European rule...and that although the Europeans succeeded in dominating SE Asia...militarily and economically, they proved unable to dominate the region culturally."¹⁴ Although the Philippines remains predominantly Catholic, the Southern Philippine islands of Mindanao

and the Sulu Archipelago remain mostly Muslim.

The Friend of My Enemy is My Enemy: Jemaah Islamiyah

In December of 2001, former Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz remarked that "going after Al Qaeda in Indonesia is not something that should wait until after Al Qaeda has been uprooted from Afghanistan."¹⁵ His comment underscored the level of importance of Indonesia, the most populated Muslim country, in the eyes of the United States. Al Qaeda in Indonesia is Jemaah Islamiyah.

Jemaah Islamiyah (Arabic for *Islamic Group*)¹⁶ is widely regarded as the power broker and face of radical Islam throughout SE Asia. In August 2006, Al Qaeda's second in command Ayman Al Zawahiri released a video purporting that Al Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah had joined forces and will "form on-line to fight its enemies."¹⁷ This more or less solidified the nexus between Al Qaeda (AQ) and other radical Islamic terrorist networks around the world, especially in SE Asia. This very public alliance even led American officials to the rename AQ to AQAM, or Al Qaeda and Associated Movements. Gross stated the goal of Jemaah Islamiyah is "the unification of Muslim Malay people into a single Islamic state comprising not only Indonesia and Malaysia, but also the southern Thai and Philippine provinces."¹⁸

The United States elevated its interest in Jemaah Islamiyah in December of 2001 when Singapore authorities uncovered a plot to bomb the U.S. embassy.¹⁹ However, JI was fully established and directly involved in or supporting terrorist actions since 1993.²⁰ According to the Council on Foreign Relations, Jemaah Islamiyah dates back to the late 1970s; however, there is debate among experts whether or not the name referred to an informal gathering of Muslim radicals or if the name was a label used by the Indonesian

government for disenfranchised radical Islamists.²¹ Like many radical Islamic movements in SE Asia, the genesis stages can be traced back to the times of colonial rule. As the country emerged from Dutch colonial rule in the 1940s, a fiery Islamic organization started and became known as Darul Islam.²² Darul Islam was fueled by a violent radical belief that advocated the establishment of Islamic law, or *Sharia law*, in Indonesia.

According to Gross, Darul Islam members can be traced to Afghanistan in the 1980s where they trained and fought for the Mujahideen against the Soviet Union. It was in Afghanistan where Darul Islam members Abu Bakar Bashir and Abdullah Sungkar began to break away from Darul Islam to form Jemaah Islamiyah.

Indonesian by birth, Bashir and Sungkar were both imprisoned and later exiled by the Indonesian dictator Suharto because of their challenges to what they believed was Indonesia's secular society. In 1991 in Pakistan, Al Qaeda reportedly reached out and assisted the advancement of Jemaah Islamiyah. Gross points out that a meeting took place between Sungkar and Usama bin Laden where bin Laden "agreed to takeover the financing of further Mujahideen training of SE Asians in Afghanistan...and to formally structure the Jemaah Islamiyah organization to closely parallel bin Laden's own Al Qaeda."²³

In 1996, Jemaah Islamiyah leadership produced a document that represented their by-laws. The document, known as the Pedomani Umum Perjuangan al Jamaah al Islamiyah, or PUPJI, was written in Arabic and argued principally for the establishment of an Islamic state and a caliphate.²⁴ The PUPJI outlined how four territorial regions were presided over by four separate Jemaah Islamiyah councils known as Mantiqis.²⁵ Mantiqi One covered southern Thailand, Singapore and the Malay Peninsula. Mantiqi Two

covered the main islands of Indonesia. Mantiqi Three covered the southern Philippines and Brunei. Mantiqi Four covered cells in Australia. According to Gross, a Mantiqi was comparable to a brigade type area of operations. Mantiqis were further broken down to Wakalahs (battalions), Khatibahs (companies), Qirdas (platoons), and Fiahs (squads).²⁶

In the early 1990s, Jemaah Islamiyah acted in more of a preparatory phase comparable to what Mao Zedong outlined as phase one of revolutionary war.²⁷ With the demise of the Suharto regime in Indonesia in 1998, Jemaah Islamiyah entered into phase two and began limited attacks against government entities. Most notable to date has been the Bali bombings of 2002 (a significant blow to the tourism industry).

Another Friend of Our Enemy: The Abu Sayyaf Group

The Filipino Muslim population predominantly resides in the island of Mindanao and the smaller islands of the Sulu Archipelago. Similar to other Muslim regions in SE Asia, their conversion to Islam dates back to the Arab Muslim traders of the 13th Century.²⁸ The Filipino Muslims became known as Moros (derived from Moors) during the four-century Spanish occupation of the Philippines. According to Bilveer Singh, the Moros have been fighting “the largely Christian north, be it under Spain, the United States, or the Philippines...unabated...” since the 15th Century.²⁹ This struggle produced several separatist Muslim organizations that believed in Salafi Jihad and desired an independent Islamic state in Mindanao and Sulu. In 1972, a group known as the Moro Nationalist Liberation Front (MNLF) emerged. Key leaders in the MNLF later broke away and established the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 1977 when they believed the MNLF became too distant from the premise of an independent Islamic state. Members from both the MNLF and the MILF who felt disenfranchised later joined forces with an

emerging Salafi Jihadist movement known for its ruthlessness and violence – The Abu Sayyaf Group.³⁰

Abu Sayyaf literally translates into “bearer of the sword.”³¹ According to Singh, many of the founding members of the ASG were both religious scholars and grass root level religious zealots who, like many of the founding members of Jemaah Islamiyah, served with the Mujahideen fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s.³² The original leader, Abdurajak Janjalani, was from the island of Basilan. As with Jemaah Islamiyah founders Bashir and Sungkar, Janjalani reportedly met Usama bin Laden in Afghanistan during the Mujahideen struggle against the Soviets. According to Senior Fellow at the United States Institute of Peace Zachary Abuza, Janjalani was likely an ancillary member of The Islamic International Brigade (IIB), the nucleus of what would become Al Qaeda.³³ (*JI founders Bashir and Sungkar were likely members as well*). Janjalani was a fervent believer in the establishment of a pure Islamic State in the Southern Philippines and a pan Islamic caliphate across SE Asia.³⁴ He found an interested audience in the members of the IIB.

In August 1989, after decades of fighting, the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) finally began official negotiations with the Muslim separatist organizations regarding *some autonomy* in parts of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago. However, Janjalani viewed the negotiations as inconsequential to his vision of an Islamic state. Janjalani vowed to pursue the creation of a pure Islamic state through a violence and Salafi Jihad.³⁵

Janjalani trained and studied with members of Al Qaeda and Bin Laden in both Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan. Author Max Gross believed Janjalani entered into a

philosophical and financial agreement with bin Laden and Al Qaeda.³⁶ Janjalani would swear allegiance to Al Qaeda and bin Laden in exchange for financing, expertise, and materiel support.

Janjalani returned to Basilan in late 1991. Part of the agreement included training members of Jemaah Islamiyah at MILF training camps in Mindanao. Ramzi Yousef, the original architect of the 1993 WTC bombing, was reportedly dispatched by bin Laden to teach bomb making at these training camps.³⁷ The final stipulation of the agreement, according to Gross, was for Janjalani to "...establish an independent organization, the Abu Sayyaf Group..." to be a part of Al Qaeda's international terrorist network.³⁸

An Emerging Friend of Our Enemy: Radical Muslims in Thailand

Today Thailand is over 94 percent Buddhist.³⁹ However, Islam arrived earlier than Buddhism in southern Thailand, again by way of early Arab traders.⁴⁰ Despite the overwhelming majority of Buddhism throughout Thailand, Muslims in Southern Thailand enjoyed a degree of autonomy up until the 20th Century when forced attempts at assimilation began.

Formally known as Siam, what we know as Thailand officially annexed Southern Thai Muslim regions in 1909 with the Anglo-Siamese Treaty.⁴¹ From 1921 through World War II, Bangkok began a series of reforms in an effort to integrate Muslims into greater Thailand. Separatist insurgencies emerged from these early attempts to assimilate southern Muslims into mainstream, Buddhist Thailand. Both oral tradition and historical study kept these sometimes-brutal attempts by Bangkok to destroy local religion, culture, and language at the forefront with many Muslims in the region.

Although Muslims comprise less than five percent of the total population of Thailand,

eighty percent of southern Thais are Muslim and consider themselves ethnically and linguistically Malay.⁴² They refer to themselves specifically as the *Jawi* and to their language as *Baso Jawi*, a distinct dialect of Malay.⁴³ As stated earlier, the Jawi fiercely resisted attempts at force assimilation by the dominant Thai-Buddhist powerbrokers. Author and Thailand expert Pierre Le Roux summarizes the position of the Jawis when he stated, “The inhabitants of Patani (a region in southern Thailand), in the past Malay, are now inhabitants of Thailand by territorial absorption...they are not yet Thai because of their remaining Malay and... they are Muslims.”⁴⁴

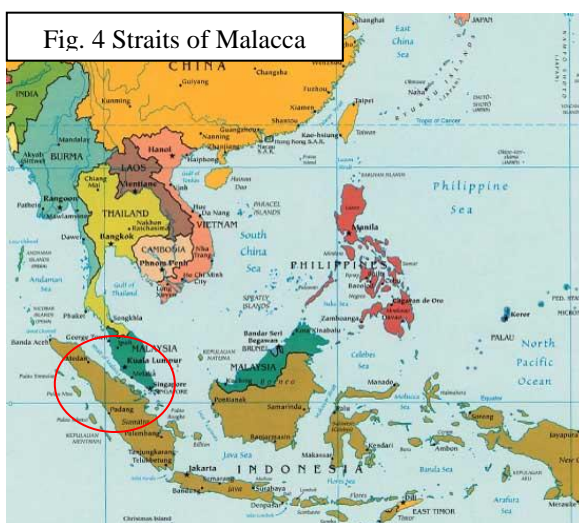
Violence in Southern Thailand associated with radical Islamic movements has resulted in over 3,000 deaths since 2004.⁴⁵ Despite the growing unrest tied to the Salafi ideology, the U.S. State Department has not made public any irrefutable evidence that Southern Thai Muslims have established *formal* connections or affiliations with Al Qaeda.⁴⁶ As of now, it appears the Muslim Thais desire to keep their struggle a localized insurgency centered on fair and equal treatment from the Bangkok government. The “insurgents” likely know that advertised affiliations with groups categorized as Islamic terrorists will draw the ire and involvement of the United States. In addition, many moderate Muslims may favor a greater degree of autonomy in Southern Thailand, but they do not desire the rigid Sharia Law comparable to the Taliban in Afghanistan; especially if it were outsiders that showed up to impose the system. That said, what is described as a local insurgency today is still highly vulnerable to escalation.

The Thai government has been known to use heavy-handed tactics in their attempts to quell the insurgency.⁴⁷ The southern region continues to be the poorest in the country. Attendance is up at the local pondoks. Many of the instructors and leaders at the pondoks

were trained in the Middle East. The feeling of disenfranchisement by the Muslims has spurred an Islamic revivalism in the south. Hard line rhetoric is now sounds increasingly like Salafi Jihad and uses language that exhorts the removal of Buddhists from Muslim lands. Financing for the insurgency has been traced back to Saudi Arabia.⁴⁸ How much and how often is unknown. However, the disproportionate attacks by the Thai government, coupled with poverty and feelings of subjugation, are key elements that can connect Salafi Jihadists with the population. Is Thailand on the cusp of increased involvement by outside radical Islamists? It is not a groundless argument to state a connection has already been made.

How Salafi Jihad in Southeast Asia Threatens The United States

Stability in the region is critical for the United States. SE Asia is the most densely populated Muslim region in the world, with Indonesia as the most populated Muslim country with approximately 86% of their 240 million people following Islam.⁴⁹ Economically, the region is home to some of the most important waterways with strategic interest to the United States - the South China Sea and the Straits of Malacca.⁵⁰



Every year over a trillion dollars worth of goods and services passes through the Straits of Malacca (pictured).⁵¹

Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines are all key members of the Association for Southeast Nations (ASEAN). According to the Heritage Foundation, the United States

exports over 50 billion dollars of goods to ASEAN each year (behind only to Canada,

Mexico, and Europe).⁵² If Islamist inspired violence increased and spread, it could potentially destabilize the region and its critical link to global commerce.

Former Secretary of State and Head of the Joint Chiefs Colin Powell often used the phrase that, “money is a coward.”⁵³ What Powell meant was that violence and instability are definitive ways to plunge a region into economic isolation and poverty. U.S. and other foreign investment and trade would dramatically decrease if Salafi Jihad gained traction SE Asia. Further struggle and poverty would give the Jihadists a golden opportunity to capitalize on the disenfranchised populations and garner local support to attack the governments, especially the Western leaning governments of the Philippines and Thailand.

Contrary to what some would believe, resultant violence from a Salafi Jihad in SE Asia would not be confined or isolated to the region. The problem would have significant global repercussions. Any increase in the freedom of action by radical Islamists in SE Asia would advance the lethal reach of Salafi Jihadist and perhaps facilitate further attacks against the “*source for all the world's corruption, materialism and sin - the United States.*”

An Increase in Global Reach

In the United States, Islamic related violence in SE Asia gained a greater degree of



Fig. 5 Martin and Gracia Burnham

notoriety when the Abu Sayaff Group (ASG) kidnapped two American missionaries, Martin and Gracia Burnham (pictured), in May of 2001. Gracia Burnham described the brazen assault that led to their capture in her book *In the Presence of*

My Enemies. In it she discussed how an ASG member said the kidnapping was for ransom; however, that the ultimate goal for the ASG was for the world to be modeled after Afghanistan (a Taliban led Islamic state at the time).⁵⁴ Do these extremists have the power to move the region, let alone the world, down the path toward an Islamic State?

Skeptics have voiced several reasons why they think a *tempered level of involvement* by the United States in SE Asia would be prudent. First, that American missionaries and tourists have no business being in such a volatile area; simply staying away from the area would control the terrorist's direct impact on American citizens. Second, that the Jemaah Islamiyah, the ASG, and Thai upstarts do not have the funding or the global reach to pose a significant threat to the United States. Third, that many of the "acts of terrorism" in SE Asia are not the trademarks of Salafi Jihadists, but more of common hard-core criminals; and that these criminals are the problems of the local governments of Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Unfortunately history has already proven the skeptics wrong. Both Jemaah Islamiyah and the Abu Sayaff Group have shown they are capable of acts of enormous consequence. In February 2004, the ASG bombed a ferryboat in Manila killing over 100 people.⁵⁵ This is considered the deadliest terrorist attack ever at sea. Throughout 1994 and until January 1995, both the ASG and JI provided logistical support to Ramzi Yousef and his terrorist cell for an operation to blow up 11 American jet airliners flying from Manila to the United States.⁵⁶ The operation was known as Bojinka (*Serb - Croate meaning Explosion*).⁵⁷ Luckily a small fire in the apartment used by Yousef and his plotters ultimately led to the discovery of the bomb making materials by Filipino Emergency Services. When their activity and location were compromised, Yousef and

his team received assistance from JI and the ASG to safely exfiltrate the country.⁵⁸

On 12 October 2002, on the second anniversary of the USS Cole bombing in Yemen, a huge car bomb killed more than 200 and injured 300 on the Indonesian resort island of Bali.⁵⁹ Most were foreigners, mainly Australian tourists. It was preceded by a blast at the U.S. consulate in nearby Denpasar. The attack known as the 2002 Bali Bombing was, and remains, the most deadly attack executed by Jemaah Islamiyah. One of the most disturbing examples of the global terrorist reach having ties to SE Asia was the alleged connection of JI and ASG to the bombing of the Oklahoma City Federal Building in April, 1995. In his book *Al Qaeda: Brotherhood of Terror*, author Paul Williams makes a compelling connection of the widespread conspiracy, involving SE Asia that ultimately led to Oklahoma City:

While making final preparations for Bojinka, the terrorists (Yousef and cell members) met with Terry Nichols several times in Cebu City (Philippines). Nichols, along with Timothy McVeigh, were charged with the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995, that killed 168 people and wounded another 600. Some FBI officials now believe that Nichols, who has a “mail order” Filipino wife from Cebu, obtained contact with Yousef through Muslim students at Southwest College in Weatherford, Oklahoma. The officials further believe that Yousef and Murad provided Nichols with training in making and handling bombs. Without such instruction, Nichols and McVeigh would not have been able to assemble a 5,600-pound bomb made of ammonium nitrate and nitromethane. Several informants recently gave testimony that they met Nichols with Yousef in the Philippines and that the American was affectionately known there as “the Farmer.”⁶⁰

According to Williams, both the JI and the ASG provided logistical support and safe haven for Yousef’s Al Qaeda cell. Yousef and Al Qaeda provided bomb training and possibly financing for Nichols and McVeigh. Nichols and McVeigh killed 168 fellow Americans.⁶¹ The obvious deduction is the Islamic terrorists from SE Asia not only have the potential to directly impact the United States through their terrorist actions, but that

they already have in Oklahoma City.

Just recently on 22 April 2009, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton stated before congress that the Taliban's movement and control of Northern Pakistan represented a "...mortal threat to the United States."⁶² Clinton's address centered on the fact that Pakistan is a nuclear-armed power. However, it also underscored the seriousness of terrorists having anything comparable to an unfettered base of operations to plan and prepare for global acts of terrorism. SE Asia, or any region in the world, providing safe haven and freedom of action to terrorist cells would be an extremely dangerous development for the United States and its allies. The enormity of this arrangement would be comparable to what the Taliban provided Al Qaeda in parts of Afghanistan prior to 9/11.

With Al Qaeda operations significantly impacted in both Iraq and Afghanistan, they are likely looking for another steady base of operational support. Increasing traction by Salafi Jihadists in Southeast Asia could give Al Qaeda the freedom to train, recruit, and plan for future terrorist operations without interference from the host government. Author Zachary Abuza described SE Asia as having potential to be an Al Qaeda "back office of operations."⁶³ The argument can be made that the office has already "leased space" as evidenced by the Yousef cell and training at camps in Basilan and Mindanao. Abuza goes as far to say that an international terrorist *interdependence* has taken root in SE Asia; specifically, the close relationship between Al Qaeda in the Middle East (*money and expertise*); with Jemaah Islamiya in Indonesia (*expertise and personnel*); and with the ASG and MILF in the Philippines (*personnel and safe haven*).⁶⁴

Terrorism expert James Forest described the emerging SE Asia dynamic when he

stated, “Mindanao has become a hub of knowledge transfer for armed groups throughout Southeast Asia...and according to Philippine military intelligence these camps have played host to several hundred trainers from the Middle East.”⁶⁵ Forrest also stated that several trainees at the Indonesian and Filipino training camps are from the Pattani region of Southern Thailand, and that Pattani has recently become the home of its own training camps.⁶⁶ Forrest’s Thai connection challenges an earlier assessment from the U.S. State Department that the insurgency in Southern Thailand is based on local grievances. Has the terrorist inkblot spread? Bilveer Singh coined the phrase “The Talibanization of Southeast Asia” for the title of his book. If left unchecked, Singh’s perception could become a reality quicker than many think.

What Can The United States Do? The Philippines Model

Many people in the United States feel as though U.S. personnel and assets are overcommitted in Iraq and Afghanistan,⁶⁷ and that any significant involvement in SE Asia is a force structure problem. An additional counterargument is the problem of access to these countries. Since most countries in SE Asia are generally stable and have relatively solid relations with the U.S., an invitation of sorts would be required for the U.S. to assist in any manner. The United States’ security assistance program aimed at helping the GRP combat the ASG *continues* to set an excellent precedent for how the U.S. can impact the rise of Salafi Jihadism at the operational level.

Iterations of both Joint Task Forces (JTFs) and scaled down Joint Special Operations Task Forces (JSOTFs) have significantly disrupted the ASG’s ability to operate and led to the death or capture of several high-ranking ASG leaders. The assistance has included standard activities such as foreign military aid and sales, intelligence sharing, and major



Fig 5. Filipino General Examines ASG Update Board

theater exercises (Balikatan). The most important component of the assistance has been the Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET), spearheaded by U.S. Special Forces.

In the Philippines, the JCET allowed more direct involvement by U.S. forces to influence the manner in which Filipino forces combat the ASG. U.S. Special Forces were the primary mechanism that interacted with Filipino forces at the tactical and operational levels. They closely worked with the Filipinos and taught them counterinsurgency (COIN) TTPs and operational doctrine from what the recognized COIN experts David Galula, David Kilcullen, General Patraeus, and General Mattis have codified with years of study and experience.

The security assistance program has been executed under the watchful eye of the GRP and has included a force cap.⁶⁸ This added scrutiny had political overtones from the Filipino government and was an effort to temper U.S. access and activities. Despite these limitations, and competing force requirements with Iraq and Afghanistan, operations in the Philippines have been successful and an example of an economic use of resources. The security assistance operations in the Philippines continue today. The issue remains whether or not the success will endure if the U.S. scales back.

As with operations in the Philippines, diplomatic negotiations are required before any additional actions can proceed. The United States has generally good diplomatic

relations with both Thailand and Indonesia, despite some of their recent political unrest.⁶⁹ U.S. led Combined / Joint Exercise Cobra Gold in Thailand has been in existence for years and has recently included Indonesian military participation. Cobra Gold could provide an excellent foundation for a focused security assistance program aimed at Salafi Jihadists. The key to this tactical and operational level relationship is the United States' strategic level involvement with the aforementioned Association for Southeast Asian Nations.

Thailand, and especially Indonesia, already have political balancing acts they must perform with regard to U.S. relations. The population of Indonesia does not support the U.S. led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Publicly moving closer to the United States will likely not be popular with the citizenry. Any perception of cooperation with the United States in military actions against *fellow Indonesian Muslims* could create civil unrest by fracturing Indonesia's balance of "the people, the government, and the military."⁷⁰ The U.S. could blunt the political fallout for the Indonesia government by striving for greater involvement in ASEAN. The hypersensitivity of the Indonesians in being too close politically to the United States could be mitigated by a regional relationship with the U.S. Simply put, there is safety in numbers.

ASEAN could allow Indonesia and the United States to move closer under the external appearance of *economic and security based* regional cooperation. Economically, Indonesia could be given advantageous trade agreements regarding their oil and gas, and they could position themselves to receive additional foreign aid from the U.S. The United States and Indonesia would require deft information management to placate any outrage by the Indonesian population resulting from a shift toward to the United States.

This strategic level information operation would have to highly publicize the economic benefits to the Indonesian people to overshadow any concerns about the security assistance stipulations.

Unfortunately the U.S. has been unable to capitalize on engaging ASEAN and has given it little thought as recently as the Bush administration. President of the U.S. Asia Society Vishakha Desai stated that, “Our (the U.S.) prism of foreign policy was so much through the war on terror that a very strong feeling emerged in the ASEAN countries that the US hasn't paid attention to them.”⁷¹

However, this perception of lack of attention may be changing. A recent trip to Indonesia in February 2009, by Secretary of State Hilary Clinton was a move to show the United States’ commitment to reengage with Indonesia. A Stratfor Global Intelligence article reported that the Clinton trip to Jakarta was “signaling a symbolic shift... that the United States was planning to join the ASEAN treaty of amity and cooperation.”⁷² Greater U.S. involvement in ASEAN and the increased participation in regional combined / joint exercises like Cobra Gold have potential for the “Philippines model” to expand to other countries in the region. This move could have a tremendous impact in the United States’ ability to prosecute the Long War on the “Third Front.”

Conclusion

Parts of Southeast Asia remain vulnerable to the spread of radical Islam. Al Qaeda’s Salafi Jihadist message has found an audience in parts of Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and elsewhere. The nexus between Al Qaeda and the radical Muslim organizations Jemaah Islamiyah and the Abu Sayyaf Group have been established, and the connection to groups in Thailand is in its beginning stages. The United States has

strategic interests in the stability of the region. Any additional freedom of action by these terrorist organizations could create regional economic instability, and directly threaten the United States and its allies. The United States has been successful in assisting the Philippines combat the Abu Sayyaf Group through diplomacy and an efficient use of security cooperation programs. We must stay engaged with the Philippines, and expand our relationships with both Indonesia and Thailand to parallel the success of U.S. and Filipino security cooperation. *By expanding the Third Front of the Long War, perhaps the Long War could become a bit shorter.*

Notes

¹ Pershing Rifles Charlie Company Twelfth Regiment (Airborne) Web site, General John Joseph Pershing Biography, <http://web.mit.edu/c12abn/www/pershing.shtml> (accessed 21 April 2009).

² Global Security.org Web site, “Salafi Jihadism,” <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/intro/islam-salafi.htm> (accessed 21 April 2009).

³ Babylon.com Translation Web site, <http://www.babylon.com/definition/jihad/English> (accessed 29 April 2009).

⁴ Mark E. Stout, Thomas F. Lynch III, T.X. Hammes, “Transnational Movement and Terrorism,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 53 (2nd Quarter 2009), 29.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Peter Chalk, “Al Qaeda and its Links to Terrorist Groups in Asia,” in *The New Terrorism Anatomy, Trends and Counter-Strategies*, ed. by Andrew Tan and Kumar Ramakrishna (Eastern Universities Press, 2002), 109.

⁷ Bilveer Singh, *The Talibanization of Southeast Asia* (Praeger Security International, Westport CT), 33.

⁸ Max L. Gross, *A Muslim Archipelago* (Washington DC, National Defense Intelligence College Press), 7.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid, 8.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ News transcript from U.S. Department of Defense Web site, Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz Interview with Far Eastern Economic Review, 1 November 2001, <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2245> (accessed 25 April 2009).

¹⁶ Amy Zalman, "Jemaah Islamiyah," at About.com Web site, http://terrorism.about.com/od/groupsleader1/p/Jemaah_Islamiya.htm (accessed 22 April 2009).

¹⁷ Singh, *Talibanization of Southeast Asia*, xxxii.

¹⁸ Gross, *Muslim Archipelago*, 104.

¹⁹ Global Security.org Web site, "Jemaah Islamiyah," <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/ji.htm>, (accessed 25 April 2009).

²⁰ Gross, *Muslim Archipelago*, 102.

²¹ Council of Foreign Relations Web site, "Jemaah Islamiyah," <http://www.cfr.org/publication/8948/> (accessed 22 April 2009).

²² Singh, *Talibanization of Southeast Asia*, 29.

²³ Gross, *Muslim Archipelago*, 103.

²⁴ Ibid, 104.

²⁵ Ibid, 107.

²⁶ Ibid, 107.

²⁷ Phase 1: Earn the population's support...; Phase 2: Guerilla attacks on government troops and institutions...; Phase 3: Conventional warfare...go on the offensive.

²⁸ Singh, *Talibanization of Southeast Asia*, 33.

²⁹ Ibid, 34.

³⁰ Ibid, 36.

³¹ Zachary Abuza, *Balik Terrorism: The Return of the Abu Sayyaf* (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army), 2.

³² Singh, *Talibanization of Southeast Asia*, 35.

³³ Abuza, *Balik Terrorism*, 2.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Abuza, *Balik Terrorism*, 2.

³⁶ Gross, *Muslim Archipelago*, 203.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ CIA World Fact Book Web site, "Thailand," <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/th.html> (accessed 25 April 2009).

⁴⁰ Pierre LeRoux, "To Be or Not to Be... The Cultural Identity of the Jawi (Thailand)," *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 57, 1998, 224.

⁴¹ Ibid, 228.

⁴² Ibid, 224.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 232.

⁴⁵ Denis D. Gray, "Thailand's Bloody Insurgency Deeply Rooted," Boston.com Web site, 18 April 2009, http://www.boston.com/news/world/asia/articles/2009/04/18/thailands_bloody_muslim_insurgency_deeply_rooted/ (accessed 30 April 2009).

⁴⁶ U.S. State Department Web site, "Thailand, Country Specific Information," http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1040.html (accessed 30 April 2009).

⁴⁷ International Crisis Group Web site, "Thailand: Political Turmoil and the Southern Insurgency," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5640&l=1> (accessed 28 April 2009).

⁴⁸ Richard Halloran, "Uneven Success against Islamist." The Washington Times Web site, 4 May 2007, <http://lexisnexis.com/us/inacademic/search/homesubmitForm.do> (accessed 23 April 2009).

⁴⁹ CIA World Fact Book Web site, "Indonesia," <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/id.html> (accessed 23 April 2009).

⁵⁰ Comparable to the importance of the Panama Canal, the Straits of Hormuz, the Straits of Gibraltar, and the Suez Canal.

⁵¹ Malacca Straits Development and Research Center, "Introduction to the Straits of Malacca," <http://www.fsas.upm.edu.my/~masdec/web/straits.html> (accessed 25 April 2009).

⁵² Walter Lohman, "Guidelines for U.S. Policy in Southeast Asia," The Heritage Foundation Web site, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/bg2017.cfm> (accessed 25 April 2009).

⁵³ Jay Evensen, "Powell Taught a Big Lesson in Just Four Words," Deseret News Web site, 27 January 2008, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/1,5143,695247011,00.html> (accessed 25 April 2009).

⁵⁴ Gracia Burnham, *In the Presence of My Enemies*, (Tyndale House Publishers, 2003), 17-18.

⁵⁵ Simon Elegant, "The Return of the Abu Sayyaf," 23 August 2004, Time Magazine Web site, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,686107,00.html> (accessed 25 April 2009).

⁵⁶ Terrorismfiles.org Web site, "Ramzi Yousef," http://terrorismfiles.org/individuals/ramzi_yousef.html (accessed 25 April 2009).

⁵⁷ Paul L. Williams, *Al Qaeda: Brotherhood of Terror*, (Alpha Books, 2002), 145.

⁵⁸ Abuza, *Balik Terrorism*, 7.

⁵⁹ Australian Federal Police Web site, "Bali bombings 2002," http://afp.gov.au/international/operations/previous_operations/bali_bombings_2002 (accessed April 26 2009).

⁶⁰ Williams, *Al Qaeda: Brotherhood of Terror*, 145-146.

⁶¹ Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum Web site, "History and Mission," <http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org/secondary.php?section=1&catid=193> (accessed 26 April 2009).

⁶² Paul Richter, "Pakistan is in grave danger, Clinton says," Chicago Tribune Web site, 23 April 2009, http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-clinton_23apr23,0,7206946.story (accessed 26 April 2009).

⁶³ Zachary Abuza, "Al Qaeda in Southeast Asia: Exploring the Linkages," in *After Bali: The Threat of Terrorism in Southeast Asia*, eds. Kumar Ramakrishna and See Seng Tan, (Singapore, Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies, 2003), 135.

⁶⁴ Abuza, *Balik Terrorism*, 23-24.

⁶⁵ James J. Forest, "Knowledge Transfer and Shared Learning Among Armed Groups," in *Armed Groups: Studies in National Security, Counterterrorism, and Counterinsurgency*, ed. Jeffrey H. Norwitz, (RI, Naval War College), 278.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Public Agenda for Citizens Web site, "Iraq and Beyond, Staying Safe in a Dangerous World," <http://www.publicagenda.com/citizen/electionguides/iraq> (accessed 26 April 2009).

⁶⁸ Facts based on the experiences of the author from deployments to JTF-510 and JSOTF-P in 2002-2003.

⁶⁹ CIA World Fact Book Web site, "Thailand," <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/th.html> (accessed 25 April 2009).

⁷⁰ Also known as the "Clauswitzian Trinity." An imbalance in the relationship of the people, the government, and the military can create instability in a nation's government.

⁷¹ Dayo Olapade, "Clinton's Reward to Indonesia," Guardian.Co.UK Web site, 19 February 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2009/feb/19/hillary-clinton-indonesia> (accessed 28 April 2009).

⁷² Stratfor.com Web site, "Indonesia, U.S.: a Move Toward Reengagement," 19 February 2009, http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20090219_indonesia_u_s_move_toward_re_engagement (accessed 28 April 2009).

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